

Report **Petroglyph National Monument**

■ **1.0 Site Description**

Petroglyph National Monument, encompassing 7,244 acres, was established in June 1990 as a new unit of the NPS to preserve the more than 20,000 prehistoric and historic petroglyphs and other significant natural and cultural resources that are on the west side of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The major landscape feature of Albuquerque's western horizon is the west mesa, which was created by a series of volcanic eruptions and lava flows about 100,000 years ago. What remains of those eruptions are the mesa, with its five volcanic cones, and the dark, winding, 17-mile-long escarpment. The petroglyphs are symbols or figures that have been scratched, pecked, or abraded on the dark patina of the basaltic rocks of this escarpment. Although the petroglyphs occur along the entire escarpment and along the mesa-top arroyos, four areas along the mesa escarpment have concentrations of many petroglyphs within relatively small areas – Piedras Marcadas Canyon, Boca Negra Canyon, Rinconada Canyon, and Mesa Prieta.

The petroglyph images include abstract and geometric designs and figures of reptiles, birds, large mammals, masked and horned serpents, as well as four-pointed stars, flute players, and other anthropomorphic figures. This collection of "piedras marcadas" ("marked rocks") illustrates the rich complexity of Puebloan cultural expression. Although the images may be appreciated by non-Indians as a rich visual gallery of prehistoric artistry, they have a much deeper traditional and cultural meaning to present day Pueblo peoples. The Indian community has said that the placement of the petroglyph images was purposeful and that their meaning and significance are inseparable from the landscape, nearby landforms, and other petroglyphs. The petroglyphs are part of the natural setting and the cultural landscape (defined below).

Equally important as the petroglyphs and their context, however, is the landscape of the monument. The entire west mesa landscape, including views from the mesa to the Sandia and Manzano Mountains, the volcanoes, and the other natural resources and features, is also considered of traditional and cultural value to the Pueblo people. Special knowledge of monument features, traditional and cultural sites, and petroglyphs have been passed from generation to generation for centuries. This landscape has continued as a part of the cultural identity of these peoples – a place of traditional and cultural value and a place where Indian people have come to practice traditional and cultural activities. It is also a place whose timeless and natural beauty and sense of place can be appreciated and respected by others.

The annual visitation level is approximately 100,000 visitors per year. This includes international visitors from other countries, national visitors from all over the United States and local visitors from the neighborhoods adjacent to the Monument. The Monument is a NPS unit in an “urban” setting adjacent to a major city. When the weather is pleasant during anytime of the year, local visitation levels are constant. The peak visitation season for national and international visitors is from early spring (March) through late autumn (October).

The Monument’s GMP was completed in 1998. It includes plans for visitor access and contact points, trails, and a visitor center. Coordination with neighboring tribes is key to the planning for many aspects the Park. In order to protect the resources and traditional use areas, Park management is limiting improvements to the periphery of the Monument.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Albuquerque is served by an international airport, buses and passenger trains. Public transportation to the Park is very limited. Most visitors see the Park via personal vehicle, although a public bus does go to the Park. The Park is accessible by vehicle via Interstate Highway 40, Coors and Unser Boulevards. While public transportation does exist in the City of Albuquerque, its access to the Park and the visitor center is not direct.

Otherwise, the Park itself currently does not have an Alternative Transportation System (ATS) in operation.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Petroglyph National Monument is unique for several reasons. It is located adjacent to an ever expanding major metropolitan area with development issues and pressures on all sides. At the same time, the Monument is noted for its natural and cultural resources and is considered a sacred landscape by the surrounding tribes. The significance of the Monument is not strictly derived from the sites and physical features as individual elements but rather as a complete landscape. The challenge for management therefore is twofold: to preserve the natural and cultural resources in their entirety, while also meeting the demands of an urban area to be accessible for community use.

Eventually the Monument will be completely surrounded by development, as the eastern boundary is already. How the Monument will accommodate the additional visitation levels and the demand of the adjacent development while preserving the integrity of its resources will remain the primary challenge in the coming years.

The GMP currently outlines a trail system in the Monument. However, more detailed planning and activities need to be undertaken to develop and implement this plan. Work is on going to inventory all natural and cultural resources in the Monument. A two-year

Ethnographic Landscape Report is also underway. Once these projects are completed, and critical baseline information has been gathered, Park management will be ready to begin looking at a comprehensive road and trail plan for the Monument.

Traffic congestion within the monument is not a critical problem currently. Therefore implementation of a shuttle service is not warranted for this site at this time.

■ 4.0 Basis for ATS Needs

Other than the trail development activities described above, there is no need identified for an ATS at this time.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

Facsimile Transmission from Michael Quijano, Chief Ranger (Petroglyph National Monument) to Kristin Kenyon (BRW). December 6, 1999.

Petroglyph National Monument. Internet site: <http://www.nps.gov/petr>. Information printed October 7, 1999.

■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Michael Quijano, Chief Ranger. Telephone Interview. October 1999